

# Research on the “Locality” design of urban theme parks from the perspective of cultural identity: “Unique henan land of drama, China”

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## Abstract

This paper based on the perspective of cultural value and identity attribution, and studies the design and expression of theme parks with "locality" as the core. Through field investigation and research, in 2021, the latest project in Zhengzhou, Henan, China, "unique Henan land of drama,China" was selected as the research object.the case analysis method was used to analyze the design elements of "locality" and draw conclusions and suggestions. It provides a unique perspective and theoretical support for theme park design elements.

**Keywords:** *Theme park, cultural identity, local design*

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## **1. Introduction**

The opening of Disneyland in the 1950s ushered in the era of theme parks around the world. The figurative physical structure of the theme park belongs to the "actual space", the creative appeal of the theme culture, the core interpretation and cultural origin belong to the "imagination space", which is not only a place for people to spend their holidays, but also should be able to awaken the identity of the local residents. A sense of belonging is the main medium through which tourists can learn about local culture and history. The construction of urban cultural theme park is an important way to interpret the urban cultural image and regional characteristics.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theme Park**

Theme parks refer to man-made amusement parks established with specific themes. The theme park's gardens and rides are built around its theme, allowing visitors to experience a unique feeling in it. As a new tourism complex, theme park is a symbol of the advanced regional tourism industry and the level of urban development, and an important part of the modern high-end service industry.

### **2.2 Cultural identity**

People usually regard cultural identity as a set of characteristics that are unique to a specific culture and also inherent to a specific nation. Cultural identity also has a structuralist character, a particular culture is seen as a series of interrelated characteristics, so the concept of "identity" is regarded as a series of unique or structural characteristics. Identity not only implies the meaning of "identity" with fixed characteristics, but also reflects the deep meaning of "identity" sought by individuals with subjective initiative. The

representative of cultural identity theory is Collier (COLLIER, 1996). Cultural identity theory is a theory about how to deal with cultural identity in cross-cultural communication. Cultural identity theory emphasizes subjective experience and individual interpretations of behavior.

The derivation of culture can be expressed as the sum of local customs, habits, norms, human feelings, thinking and so on. And cultural identity can be a label of this derivative, helping its cultural members find uniqueness and identity. Cultural identity is the identity of a group or the group identity of a member of a culture, a sense of belonging to a group. It can be officially identified, or self-identified, or it may come from different races, ethnicities, genders, ages, social classes, religions, international geographic regions, etc. These identities distinguish individuals and cultural groups from other groups. It also establishes the premise of cross-cultural communication.

### **2.3 Locality**

"Locality" can also be called "regional". The related concepts and definitions are discussed in the category of public art. This paper studies the locality in the design of theme parks, and takes this as the axis of discussion, aiming at Expand the regional cultural design ideas of theme parks.

## **3. Method**

### **3.1 The angle of selecting the case:**

Most of the research on theme parks focuses on experience types, tourist satisfaction, consumption economy, etc. According to the knowledge map of theme parks and research, the results of relevant scholars: The keywords with higher frequency are tourism, satisfaction, experience, influence, behavior, service, authenticity and quality. It can be seen that the research on "experience" and "behavior" is attracting attention

from the academic circles. According to AECOM data, as of 2020, 53% of domestic theme parks are still in the state of "no obvious theme", mainly amusement equipment, and their content is similar. Among the parks with clear themes, the parks with the theme of fantasy cartoon characters and history and culture account for about 16% and 13% of the total respectively; the parks with the theme of animals, natural landscapes, film and television media or other types account for only a small number of the total. proportion. The common problems of theme parks, such as the lack of differences in the similarity of IP products, the lack of cultural texture, the loss of cultural identity, the lack of innovation in design, and the inability to arouse tourists' sense of pleasure, still require researchers' attention. In the case study, the researchers selected cases that highlighted regional culture and novel designs. The research value of this paper is from the perspective of cultural identity value, taking the drama art as the core theme of China's cultural tourism theme park ""Henan drama fantasy City, China" typical case as the research object. This paper analyzes and summarizes the design expression and influence of "locality" in urban theme parks, so as to provide reference theoretical support for the landing and regional development of theme park product models in various countries.

### **3.2 Research design**

Through interventional research, the researchers conducted on-the-spot investigation of the research objects, and explored the design factors with the "locality" as the axis. Summarize the arousal influence of "locality" design factors on tourists' sensory experience, and the hypothesis of the relationship with cultural identity attribution, and make theoretical analysis for later quantitative research.

Taking "locality" as the research core, based on cognitive psychology, this paper analyzes the construction conditions of the design factors of "Henan drama fantasy City, China".

People have perceptions in the process of experiencing, and the basis of obtaining experience is the perception of the things and things they have experienced. Perception includes simple perception and more complex perception. Sensation is the process of receiving stimulus energy from the external environment and converting it into neural energy; perception is the process of organizing and interpreting sensory information and giving it meaning. (5) In the experience of appreciating the plays in the theme park or participating in the interaction of performing arts and experiencing the immersive space field, tourists can obtain a sense of physical pleasure and perception through the reception of information by the sense organs and the organization and processing of information by the perception. so as to produce different levels of progressive activity experience and inner experience. It stimulates the experience of time and space, and assists in completing the physical and mental experience of people in space. Through artistic creation and expression, people can obtain different levels of progressive activity experience and inner experience in space. Through its own abstract and metaphorical artistic features, it triggers the organization and processing of information obtained by the sensory system, stimulates people's associations and thinking, makes people have a certain perception, and obtains a deep inner experience. Therefore, it can be assumed that the design factors of theme parks proposed in this study have an impact on the cultural identity of tourists. That is, tourists visit and watch plays and exhibitions in the theme park created by the space, gain an immersive multi-layered experience and generate associations, arouse the cultural identity of tourists, and enable local people to obtain cultural value recognition and identity attribution. At the same time, foreign tourists can also obtain the communication prerequisites of cultural differences, identify cultural images and construct cultural exchanges.

### **3.3 Case study**

#### **3.3.1 Case Project Introduction**

"unique Henan land of drama, China" is located in Zhengzhou City, Henan Province, China. The project covers a total area of 622 acres and has a total investment of nearly 6 billion yuan. It is one of the largest and longest performing theater settlements in China. It is a theater that covers everything, which will begin operations in the second half of 2021. There are 21 theaters of different sizes and nearly 1,000 actors, divided into 3 main plays and 18 small plays, with a total play time of nearly 700 minutes. Using immersive theatrical art as a method and the unique drama "Illusion City" as a carrier: "56 spaces, each with 4 doors, each space has different scenes, 21 large and small theaters, using a chessboard style. The pattern, the 622 acres of land are gridded, and at the same time dramatic." This project has become the first regional IP innovation of theme parks in China, creating an immersive experience model that takes regional culture as the core and superimposes time, space, history and the present. In terms of artistic creation performance, tourist experience, and behavioral impact, it is a case worthy of research by relevant researchers. This paper studies the design expression from three aspects with "locality" as the core.

#### **3.3.2 Local cultural content mining and narrative**

The chief planner of "unique Henan land of drama, China" starts from "local chronicles", excavates the core value of local culture, and carries out creation and design planning from the aspects of regional culture, regional historical figures, historical events, folklore, intangible cultural heritage, and regional geographical features, and narrates around dramatic themes. Starting from the source of content and creation, the regional cultural identity is restructured and constructed around the

axis of "locality". The difference and sense of identity in the construction of cultural identity are the image of the city, and the premise of international cross-cultural communication is shared by all countries. Cultural value, more importantly, touches the local cultural roots, activates the local growth momentum, and enhances cultural self-confidence. The case content and field inspection data are organized as shown in Figure 1. The pictures are taken by the author or provided by the operator.

### *3.3.3 local visual symbols*

One of the founders of semiotics, the German philosopher Cassirer, outlined his own aesthetic and artistic views, believing that "art can be defined as a semiotic language, or semiotic system, which is the construction and organization of human experience. It "gives us order in the grasp of visible, tactile, and audible appearances". We store information in different types of memory. When the information is visual, we call it iconic memory. The perception of visual symbols has the characteristics of intuitive visualization. The audience makes isomorphic associations with the visual symbols that carry the information. Symbolic meaning produces a more direct interpretation and achieves the ultimate goal of cross-cultural communication. Through the field investigation of the research objects, this paper takes the locality as the core and organizes the shooting and sorting out the relevant factors of the locality design from the visual symbols. As shown in Figure 2: (The above pictures are taken by the author or provided by the operator)







local themes	Core content	Design expression	Cultural identity	Case image
Regional Culture	Based on the Yellow River civilization, the theme revolves around the story of "land, food, inheritance" as the core content	Through various narrative methods such as text, space, material, color, technology, etc.	Customs, habits, norms, human feelings, and thinking generate identity and place attachment	
Historical figure	Historical celebrities who were born and lived in Henan, people who have proposed important ideas or historical and cultural contributions	The virtual space of technology and art shows the vastness of the Central Plains culture in the form of group portraits	Race, ethnicity, culture, religion, etc. produce cultural identity and identity attribution	
Historical events	The stories of the emperors of the past dynasties and the major historical events that have happened in modern times	Create expression through dramatic themes and multiple layers of rich spaces	Race, ethnicity, culture, religion, etc. produce cultural identity and identity attribution	
Folk legend	Mud dog, cloth tiger, etc.	Through pavilion space display, public space sculpture, image derivatives	Race, ethnicity, culture, religion, etc. produce cultural identity and identity attribution	
Intangible cultural heritage	Zhuxian Town Woodblock Pictures	Through pavilion space display, public space sculpture, image derivatives	Race, ethnicity, culture, religion, etc. produce cultural identity and identity attribution	
Geographical feature	South of the Yellow River, the climate is in the southern edge of the warm temperate zone, and the plain area	Acquire color memory through geographical climate environment and scenic spots	Race, ethnicity, culture, religion, etc. produce cultural identity and identity attribution	

Figure 1. Local content and case images









local themes	Design element	Design expression	Cultural identity	Case image
Folk totem symbols	Totem symbols and shapes in folklore	Develop totem symbols, such as derivatives, sculptures	Obtaining identity and cultural identity through the memory of regional cultural visual symbols	
Intangible cultural heritage	Regional woodcuts	The production experience of intangible cultural heritage craftsmanship and the visual design expression of derivative products	Obtaining identity and cultural identity through the memory of regional cultural visual symbols	
Historical themed narrative painting	Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival Long Scroll	Viewing styles and spatial experiences through digital media and dynamic presentations	Obtaining identity and cultural identity through the memory of regional cultural visual symbols	
Geographical environment	Yellow River, Plain, Loess, Wheat	Regional symbolic materials, repeated in space	Create a field through urban color and form a place attachment	
Regional color	Acquire color memory through geographical climate environment and scenic spots	Create a visual habit with city color symbols	Create a field through urban color and form a place attachment	
Regional architectural features	Architectural characteristics of ancient capitals in Tang and Song dynasties, and regional architectural characteristics of Henan	Historical and regional architectural forms, expressed in new media art	Create a field through urban color and form a place attachment	

Figure 2. Visual Symbols and Case Images

### **3.3.4 The creation of space field and immersive narrative**

In the creation of the space field of "unique Henan land of drama, China" , the innovative point is to construct an immersive narrative around "Imagination", expressing the fantastic sensory experience created by the mutual integration of technology and art, and the coexistence of "material" and "virtual".The overall project covers an area of more than 600 acres. From the overall starting point to the interspersed local space, it combines regional culture, geographical features and architectural features to reshape the "locality" and a wonderful experience that transcends time and space. Unprecedented complex and deep experience, but not created out of thin air, the immersive space narrative deepens the cultural identity of tourists. As shown in Figure 3:

## **4. Conclusion**

Based on the perspective of cultural value and identity attribution, this paper examines the application of theme park "localization" design, and draws conclusions through case analysis:

- (1) The importance of the preliminary design and planning of theme parks to the mining of local cultural content and the design of narrative techniques.
- (2) A new approach to regional visual symbol design and a new way to display it.
- (3) Innovation and immersion in space experience, such as the combination of technology and art to create space differences and restore the innovation of historical space design.

This paper proposes an influence relationship hypothesis between the different dimensions of locality design and cultural identity attribution, and makes a preliminary literature review for the later quantitative research on "locality" design factors have a positive impact on cultural identity. The research finds that especially the design trend of regional theme parks is

more inclined to the immersion of cultural experience from entertainment. The research of this paper also provides more reference and theoretical support for the upgrading of cultural consumption.





Research dimension	Field construction	Design expression	Cultural identity	Case image
Theater space	Realistic simulation of theater space to restore historical space	Restoration of the original scale of historical scenes	Create a regional field, form place attachment, and gain cultural identity	
Regional landform	Create regional identity in public space	Express regional characteristics through loess mounds, wheat fields, and architectural forms	Create a regional field, form place attachment, and gain cultural identity	
Immersive Narrative of the Future	Through the combination of art and technology, a multi-layered space that transcends past and present time and space is created	Immersive narrative experience, digital technology (mixed reality). Using a large number of technical means, the fusion of technology and art produces an immersive experience	Create a regional field, form place attachment, and gain cultural identity	
Life scene	Recreate everyday scenes in multiple ways, interspersed with past and present	Restore regional life scenes in independent theaters, and create past and present life scenes in public spaces	Create a regional field, form place attachment, and gain cultural identity	

Figure 3. Site construction and case pictures

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